

Message Text

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22

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 CEA-01 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 CIEP-01 STR-04

TRSE-00 LAB-04 SIL-01 SAM-01 OMB-01 SAJ-01 /088 W

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R 201737Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8275

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION BERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 00940

E.O. 11652: XEDS-1

TAGS: EEC

SUBJECT: DIRECT ELECTIONS TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

REF: 75 LONDON 17566

1. PRIME MINISTER WILSON, IN JANUARY 12 LETTER TO LABOR MP, MADE MOST FORTHCOMING HMG STATEMENT THUS FAR ON BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN 1978 DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. ACCORDING TO THE JANUARY 20 TIMES, WILSON INDICATED IN THE LETTER THAT A WHITE PAPER ON DIRECT ELECTIMNS COULD BE EXPECTED IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS AND THAT THE EOVERNMENT WOULD DO ITS BEST TO MEET THE 1978 TARGET DATE. IN THE LETTER, WILSON SAID, "I CAN
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ASSURE YOU THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL DO ITS BEST TO

ENSURE THAT THE LEGISLATION IS READY IN TIME. BUT I AM SURE YOU WILL READILY APORECIATE THAT ON A MATTER OF SUCH OUTSTANDING IMPORTANCE AS DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT I COULD NOT MAKE COMMITMENTS TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON THE LEGISLATION WITHOUT THE FULLEST PRIOR DISCUSSIONS, BOTH WITH PARLIAMENT HERE AND WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES' ORGANIZATIONS OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT... IT WILL BE FOR PARLIAMENT TO DECIDE AT WHAT PACE THE NECESSARY LEGISLATION SHALL PROCEED. FOR OUR PART, WE DO NOT INTEND TO HOLD THE MATTER UP UNNECESSARILY, BUT TO RUSH PARLIAMENT IN ITS CONSIDERATION OF THE QUESTIONS INVOLVED WOULD BE SELF-DEFEATING."

2. COMMENT: PAST TWO MONTHS HAVE SEEN PROGRESSIVE BACKING AWAY BY HMG FROM ITS EARLIER BLANKET ASSERTIONS THAT BRITAIN WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN 1978 DIRECT ELECTIONS TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. THIS RETREAT MAY BE BECAUSE GOVERNMENT HAS ENCOUNTERED LESS RESISTENCE IN WESTMINSTER. PRESS AND PUBLIC TO MOVING AHEAD ON DIRECT ELECTIONS THEN IT HAD ANTICIPATED. IN ADDITION, WILSON AND FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN ARE SENSITIVE TO RECENT DRUMBEAT OF CHARGES FROM THE CONTINENT THAT THEY ARE NOT GOOD EUROPEANS, AND IN THE AFTERMATH OF CALLAGHAN'S SEPARATE SEAT FIASCO, MAY WISH TO AVOID GIVING THEIR EUROPHILE CRITICS, HOME AND ABROAD. FURTHER REASON TO QUESTION THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY. CHARACTERISTICALLY, HOWEVER, WILSON -- WHILE PROMISING TO MOVE AHEAD ON THIS MATTER AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE -- HAS AT THE SAME TIME SHIFTED THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEETING THE 1978 DATE TO THE PARLIAMENT AS A WHOLE AND BUILT HIMSELF A READY ESCAPE HATCH SHOULD 1978 NOT PROVE POSSIBLE FOR BRITAIN. IN ANY EVENT, THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S FUNDAMENTAL RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AS REPORTED REFTEL ARE AS STRONG AS EVER. AND FOREIGN OFFICE SOURCES PRIVATELY CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT 1978 COMMUNITY TARGET IS OPTIMISTIC, AND THAT AS COMPLEXITIES OF DIRECT ELECTIONS BECOME INCREASINGLY APPARENT TO OTHER EC MEMBERS, PRESSURE ON UK FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERS WILL FALL.

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